

# **The Black Student Experience and Gow-Dow at Cal Poly**

**Cal Poly Pomona University Library**

## **The Black Student Experience and Gow-Dow at Cal Poly Summary**

An unidentified speaker discusses the experience of Black students at Cal Poly Pomona and Gow-Dow, a concept of Black pride and unity originated by Cal Poly Professor of Black Studies Dr. James Benson.

### **Subject Headings**

Black studies  
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
College Students, Black

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# **The Black Student Experience and Gow-Dow at Cal Poly**

**March 17, 1986**

*Speaker unidentified  
Transcribed by Lorecel Gravino*

{Musical Prelude}

As Black students came onto the Cal Poly campus late 60s and early 70s, they came from the inner city, the valleys, the city of Pomona and from around the state of California. They found that they have few things in common. One was financial aid, another? The GI Bill, the desire to get an education and of course, their Blackness.

Many students didn't make it, however. Those that stuck it out, did.

A key element to our being able to persevere was due to the personal attention we received from the Black faculty and staff. When the rest of the faculty would treat us as though we didn't belong. In one of our Black studies classes, we were introduced to a concept. A concept that followed most of us to the rest of our days in Cal Poly and beyond: Gow-Dow, it meant, I love you, Black brother, Black sister. And it made for some of us the most positive and lasting experiences a Black student can experience in a white college campus.

{Now we gonna hear on Universe this time, this particular time, to listen to the 36 Black notes on the piano. There's 36 Black notes, 52 white notes. We don't need to eliminate something, but we gonna just hear the Black notes at this time, if you don't mind. BLACKNUSS, B L A C K N U S S.}

It encouraged us to promote and take part in our African heritage. In our African American culture. And it manifests itself in Black history week programs, Black plays, Black speakers and artist and all-night sensitivity sessions. But more, than all of the above, it carried us into our music. And from our musical experiences we excelled and succeeded in everything. We did everything as a group, a family, friends and colleagues.

{Musical Interlude: Blacknuss by: Rahsaan Roland Kirk}

We were taught in class, that you can only learn from those that you respect. That you can only trust what you consistently feel, and that all restrictions are self-imposed.

{Musical Interlude}

In a seminar facilitated by James Benson, he wrote "The development of a consistent Black culture is essential if we are to survive as a people in this country. Culture, is a term which describes the collective condition of the people and their actions in terms of their conditions."

Gow-Dow reflects the changing conditions of a people of struggle. This meant that we didn't have to kill each other or our culture to make it in this country. But through each other and our culture we would survive.

For many of us Gow-Dow has been a positive experience. Let it be a positive experience for you.

Gow-Dow, Gow-Dow

{Musical Postlude}

*End of recording*